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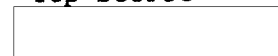


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VENEZUELA-NICARAGUA: Strained Relations

The recent hardening of Venezuela's attitude toward the Nicaraguan Government does not portend a break in relations.

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Comment: The Herrera government's rapid moves against the Nicaraguan diplomats and the rhetorical exchanges marking Sandinista charges of Venezuelan complicity in antigovernment plots is reminiscent of the manner in which Caracas reacted in 1980 to Cuba's treatment of Venezuelan personnel in Havana. Those steps led to the reduction of representation in both countries. Current political and economic considerations outweigh any short-term satisfaction Venezuela might gain from breaking relations.

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Venezuela's backing of the Sandinista regime provides a useful counter to domestic criticism of its support for El Salvador. Moreover, the Herrera government lacks broad support at home and will not risk a political battle with the opposition party, which supports the Sandinistas.

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Caracas provides substantial economic aid to Managua and recently pledged an additional \$15 million for 1982. The Venezuelans continue to believe that such aid demonstrates the nonpolitical nature of their extensive foreign aid program. They also believe such aid gives them economic leverage in Nicaragua and assists those they view as moderate members of the Sandinista regime.

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ARAB STATES: Foreign Ministers' Meeting

Arab League Foreign Ministers will meet in special session in Tunis tomorrow to discuss further action against Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights. The meeting, originally called by Syria for late December, was postponed to await the outcome of the UN Security Council debate that concluded on Wednesday.

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Comment: The Syrians are unlikely to obtain Arab agreement for any concrete actions against Israel. The meeting, however, will serve Syria's interests by keeping Arab attention focused on the Golan Heights issue and afford another opportunity for urging increased Arab political and financial backing of Syria. Damascus also will push for an Arab summit and for Arab support for a special session of the UN General Assembly to debate the annexation issue.

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MEXICO-USSR-CUBA: Possible Oil Swap

Representatives of PEMEX, Mexico's state-owned oil company, and Soviet officials are meeting in Mexico City apparently to discuss a longstanding proposal for Mexico to supply Cuba with oil in return for Soviet petroleum deliveries to Mexico's European clients. [redacted]

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Comment: The new Mexican Ambassador to the USSR, former PEMEX director Jorge Diaz Serrano, may have provided the impetus for renewed interest. Transportation savings in an oil swap would offer both Mexico and the USSR limited financial benefits. In addition, the Mexican Government, might use such an agreement to offset expected domestic criticism of a proposed increase in sales of natural gas to the US. [redacted]

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INDIA: Impact of Nationwide Strike

The one-day national strike that opposition and labor leaders organized on Tuesday to protest the government's antistrike powers was largely ineffective. [redacted] only one-third of the 19 million employees in the modern sector work force took part and that there was minimal economic disruption. [redacted]

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Comment: Although the opposition claims it gained valuable experience in its first effort to coordinate multiparty trade union agitation, the strike is a significant setback for those who are searching for some means to undermine Prime Minister Gandhi's political power. Moreover, the government's image probably has been strengthened by its handling of the situation through preemptive temporary arrests and the minimum use of force. Gandhi clearly wants to eschew repressive measures that could build public support for the opposition. [redacted]

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GHANA: Political Developments

The new regime is still having difficulty in organizing a government. A 16-member civilian cabinet, subordinate to the seven-man Provisional National Defense Council, was announced on Thursday--three weeks after the coup. The regime is stressing political action at the local level by organizing People's Defense Committees. [REDACTED]

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Comment: Like the Council, most members of the cabinet are obscure individuals, except for the Foreign Minister, a moderate whose appointment may be intended to reassure Western governments. The proposed People's Defense Committees that are being organized to fight corruption may be the harbinger of efforts to structure a "new" Ghana. The lack of organization and direction in the new regime, however, makes it uncertain what the committees will do. [REDACTED]

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USSR-US: Pentecostals' Hunger Strike

The two Soviet Pentecostals that have been on a hunger strike in the US Embassy in Moscow have said that as of today they will refuse all liquids.



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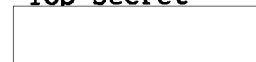
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Comment: The Soviets are unlikely to change their position that the Pentecostals will have to leave the Embassy before consideration will be given to their request to emigrate. The five other members of the religious group probably would remain in the Embassy even if one or both of the strikers were removed to a hospital.



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